

Mark: 12:28–37

From Catena Aurea:

28. And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

29. And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

30. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

31. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

33. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

GLOSS. (non occ.) After that the Lord confuted the Pharisees, and the Sadducees, who tempted Him, it is here shewn how He satisfied the Scribe who questioned Him; wherefore it is said, And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

THEOPHYLACT. See how He has enumerated all the powers of the soul; for there is a living power in the soul, which He explains, when He says, With all thy soul, and to this belong anger and desire, all of which He will have us give to Divine love. There is also another power, which is called natural, to which belong nutriment and growth, and this also is all to be given to God, for which reason He says, With all thy heart.

There is also another power, the rational, which He calls the mind, and that too is to be given whole to God.

GLOSS. (non occ.) The words which are added, And with all thy strength, may be referred to the bodily powers. It goes on: And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

THEOPHYLACT. He says that it is like, because these two commandments are harmonious one with the other, and mutually contain the other. For he who loves God, loves also His creature; but the chief of His creatures is man, wherefore he who loves God ought to love all men. But he who loves his neighbour, who so often offends him, ought much more to love Him, who is ever giving him benefits. And therefore on account of the connection between these commandments, He adds, There is none other commandment greater than these. It goes on: And the Scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God, and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

THEOPHYLACT. By which He shews that he was not perfect, for He did not say, Thou art within the kingdom of heaven, but, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.

AUGUSTINE. (de Con. Evan. ii. 73) Nor let it trouble us that Matthew says, that he who addressed this question to the Lord tempted Him; for it may be that though he came as a tempter, yet he was corrected by the answer of the Lord. Or at all events, we must not look upon the temptation as evil, and done with the intention of deceiving an enemy, but rather as the caution of a man who wished to try a thing unknown to him.

12:35–37

35. And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the Scribes that Christ is the Son of David?

36. For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

37. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

THEOPHYLACT. Because Christ was coming to His Passion, He corrects a false opinion of the Jews, who said that Christ was the Son of David, not his Lord; wherefore it is said, And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple.

THEOPHYLACT. But Christ shews Himself to be the Lord, by the words of David. For it goes on: For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand; as if He had said, Ye cannot say that David said this without the grace of the Holy Spirit, but he called Him Lord in the Holy Spirit; and that He is Lord, he shews, by this that is added, Till I make thine enemies thy footstool; for they themselves were His enemies, whom God put under the footstool of Christ.

GLOSS. (non occ.) Thus then the Lord concludes from what has gone before the doubtful question. For from the foregoing words of David it is proved that Christ is the Lord of David, but according to the saying of the Scribes, it is proved that He is his son. And this is what is added, David himself then calls him Lord, how is he then his son?

GLOSS. (non occ.) Namely, because they saw that He answered and put questions wisely.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

12:29 The Lord is One

God Fills All Things.

Athanasius: Since God is one, it is ridiculous to suppose that there could be still another “Lord” of heaven and earth in addition to the Lord who is one. There is simply no room for a second Lord of all, if the one true God fills all things in the compass of heaven and earth. *Against the Heathen* 6.4.

The One God.

Hilary of Poitiers: If sacred truth, when challenged by blasphemy, is met by silence, even that silence may be falsely construed as consent. This is what has happened in the case of the Arian assertion that because God is one, therefore his Son is not God.... The same one who authorizes us to confess the Son of God as God justifies us in proclaiming the one God. *On the Trinity* 5.1–2.

12:30a You Shall Love the Lord Your God

Spending the Power of Love on What Is Unworthy.

Basil: It is not the privilege of any chance person to go forward to the perfection of love and to learn to know him who is truly beloved, but of him who has already “put off the old man, which is being corrupted through its deceptive lusts, and has put on the new man,” which is being renewed that it may be recognized as an image of the creator. Moreover, he who loves money and is aroused by the corruptible beauty of the body and esteems exceedingly this little glory here, since he has expended the power of loving on what is not proper, he is quite blind in regard to the contemplation of him who is truly beloved. Exegetic Homilies, Homily 17.

12:30b With All Your Heart

Renouncing Other Gods.

Origen: When you decide to keep the command of this precept and reject all other gods and lords and have no god or lord except the one God and Lord, you have declared war on all others without treaty. When, therefore, we come to the grace of baptism, renouncing all other gods and lords, we confess the only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. On Exodus, Homily 8.4.

No Division into Parts.

Basil: The expression, “with the whole,” admits of no division into parts. As much love as you shall have squandered on lower objects, that much will necessarily be lacking to you from the whole. Exegetic Homilies, Homily 17.

12:30c With All Your Soul, Mind and Strength

Threefold Unity in Loving with One’s Whole Self.

Gregory of Nyssa: Human life consists in a threefold unity. We are taught similarly by the apostle in what he says to the Ephesians, praying for them that the complete grace of their “body and soul and spirit” may be preserved at the coming of the Lord. We use the word “body,” for the nutritive part, the word for the vital, “soul,” and the word “spirit” for the intellectual dimension. In just this way the Lord instructs the

writer of the Gospel that he should set before every commandment that love to God which is exercised with all the heart and soul and mind. This single phrase embraces the human whole: the corporeal heart, the mind as the higher intellectual and mental nature, and the soul as their mediator. On the Making of Man 8.5.

12:31a Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

The Summit of Virtue.

Chrysostom: This is the summit of virtue, the foundation of all God's commandments: to the love of God is joined also love of neighbor. One who loves God does not neglect his brother, nor esteem money more than a limb of his own, but shows him great generosity, mindful of him who has said, "Whoever did it to the least of my brothers did it to me." He is aware that the Lord of all considers as done to himself what is done in generosity to the poor in giving relief. He does not take into consideration the lowly appearance of the poor, but the greatness of the One who has promised to accept as done to himself what is given to the poor. Homilies on Genesis, Homily 55.12.

12:31b No Other Commandment

Nothing Else Required.

Chrysostom: Christ looks for nothing else from you, in fact, Scripture says, than loving him with all your heart and carrying out his commands. I mean, obviously the person who loves him in the way he ought to love is also ready to carry out his commands. You see, when one is kindly disposed to another, he takes pains to do everything able to attract the loved one to love for him. So, we too, if we sincerely love the Lord, will manage to discharge his commands and do nothing capable of angering our loved one. This is the kingdom of heaven; this, the enjoyment of goods; this, blessings beyond number, being found worthy to love him sincerely and in the manner he deserves. Our love for him will be genuine if we give evidence of great love for our fellow servants as well as for him. Homilies on Genesis, Homily 55.11.

Loving What Is Worthy of Love.

Augustine: This virtue consists in nothing else but in loving what is worthy of love; it is prudence to choose this, fortitude to be turned from it by no obstacles, temperance to be enticed by no allurements, justice

to be diverted by no pride. Why do we choose what we exclusively love, except that we find nothing better? But this is God, and if we prefer or equate any creature with God, we know nothing about loving ourselves. We are made better by approaching closer to him than whom nothing is better. We go to him not by walking, but by loving. We will have him more present to us in proportion as we are able to purify the love by which we draw near to him, for he is not spread through or confined by corporeal space; he is everywhere present and everywhere wholly present, and we go to him not by the motion of our feet but by our conduct. Conduct is not usually discerned by what one knows but by what one loves; good or bad love makes good or bad conduct. Letter 155, To Macedonius.

12:32 You are Right, Teacher

Above Burnt Offerings.

Hilary of Poitiers: The answer of the scribe seems to accord with the words of the Lord, for he too acknowledges the inmost love of one God, and professes the love of one's neighbor as real as the love of self, and places love of God and love of one's neighbor above all the burnt offerings of sacrifices. On the Trinity 9.24.

12:33 More Than All Whole Burnt Offerings

Mercy Is Better.

Callistus (Editor: Pope Callixtus I): My brothers, shun not only the holding, but even the hearing, of the judgment that bans mercy. For mercy is better than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. The Second Epistle to All the Bishops of Gaul 6.

12:34 Not Far from the Kingdom

12:36 The Lord Said to My Lord

Love Above All.

Hilary of Poitiers: The scribe, therefore, is not far from the kingdom of God when he acknowledges the one God who is to be loved above all things. But he is admonished by his own confession in that he does not fully grasp the mystery of the law as being fulfilled in Christ.... The scribe only recognized him according

to the flesh and the birth from Mary, who was descended from David, rather than as David's Lord. On the Trinity 9.26.

12:37 David Himself Calls Him Lord, So How is He His Son?

Lord as Son.

Gregory Nazianzen: What is lofty you are to apply to the Godhead, and to that nature in him which is superior to sufferings and incorporeal; but all that is lowly to the composite condition of him who for your sakes made himself of no reputation and was incarnate. Oration 29, On the Son 18.

Son of David and Lord of David.

Augustine: For that through which Mary had been made was not dying, but that which was made from Mary was dying. The eternity of [his] divinity was not dying, but the weakness of [his] flesh was dying. Therefore he made that reply, distinguishing in the faith of believers the one who came from the one through whom he came. For he, God and Lord of heaven and earth, came through a woman as his mother. In regard to the fact that he was Lord of the world, Lord of heaven and earth, he was also, of course, Lord of Mary; and in regard to the fact that he was creator of the world, creator of heaven and earth, he was also the creator of Mary. But insofar as it was said, "made of a woman, made under the law," he was the son of Mary. He was the Lord of Mary, he was the son of Mary; he was the creator of Mary, he was created from Mary. Do not be amazed that he is both son and Lord. For as he was [the son] of Mary, so, also, he was said to be the son of David; indeed the son of David precisely because the son of Mary. Hear the apostle speaking clearly: "who was born of the seed of David, according to the flesh." Hear that he was also the Lord of David; and let David himself say this: "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand.'" And Jesus himself proposed this to the Jews, and by it refuted them. Therefore just as he was both the son and the Lord of David, the son of David according to the flesh, the Lord of David according to [his] divinity, so he was the son of Mary according to the flesh and the Lord of Mary according to [his] majesty. Because, therefore, she was not the mother of [his] divinity and what she sought would be a miracle through [his] divinity, he answered her, "What is it to me and to you, woman?" But that you may not think that I am denying you as my mother, "My hour has not yet come." For there shall I acknowledge you when the weakness of which you are the mother has begun to hang on the cross. Tractate on John 8.9.

Instruction on His Authority.

Augustine: He spoke in the hearing of those whom he wished profitably to instruct on his authority, and to turn away from the teaching of the scribes, whose knowledge of Christ amounted then only to this, that he was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. They did not understand that he was God, and on that ground also the Lord even of David. Harmony of the Gospels 2.74.